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SUBJECT New Ministers in Yugoslav Central Government

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- On 20 July 1947 the following changes were made in the Central Government of the Federal Peoples' Republic of Yugoslavia:

Eng. Nikola Petrovic, formerly Minister of Foreign Trade in the Central Government, was appointed to the newly-created post of Minister for Electrification ("Electro-economy").

Eng. Milentije Popovic, former President of the Planning Commission of the People's Republic of Serbia, was appointed Minister of Foreign Trade in the Central Government.

- The Ministry of Electrification was established on 20 July 1947 by action of the Presidium of the Peoples' Assembly of Yugoslavia. It is responsible for the execution of the plans for the electrification of the country embodied in the Five-Year Plan. This task had formerly been the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry.

- Eng. Nikola Petrovic

Petrovic is about forty years old and was born in Cakovu (near Timisocara), Rumania. He comes of a nationalist Serbian family from Vojvodina Province and married the daughter of Daka Popovic, a fairly prominent Serb politician.

Petrovic is a graduate in electrical engineering of the University of Zagreb and has also studied in Prague.

Although not prominent in politics, Petrovic has been a member of the Communist Party since his youth, and was an underground Communist leader and organizer. He was sentenced to twelve years' penal servitude for his political activities in Timisocara, but managed to escape to Yugoslavia. Settling in Novi Sad, he posed as a persecuted Serb patriot, and thus obtained the sympathy of the Yugoslav authorities. In Novi Sad he obtained a position as manager of the city power station, largely through the influence of his father-in-law. At this time he represented himself as a nationalist and was apparently not engaged in political activities, although for a while he served as Secretary of the Yugoslav-Czech League in Belgrade.

Joining the Partisan units in the Fruska Gora area toward the end of the war,

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Petrovic helped in the political organizing of the Vojvodina. At the end of the war he became a member of the first Provisional Government (Peoples' Committee) and later Minister of Commerce in the first Central Government. Still later, he was appointed Minister of Foreign Trade, which post he occupied until becoming Minister for Electrification on 20 July 1947.

He has been elected People's Deputy from the Communist Party for the Vojvodina on both the Central and Federal lists, and is a member of the Executive Committee of the People's Front organizations for both Yugoslavia and Serbia. He is a member of the "Economic Council" and may be an adviser on economics to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. He is the recipient of high Yugoslav decorations as well as those of neighboring states.

Petrovic is an experienced and highly competent electrical engineer with outstanding commercial experience. He is efficient, and well-educated and speaks fluent English, French, Czech, German, Rumanian, and Hungarian.

4. Eng. Milentije Popovic

Popovic, a 38-year old native of Crna Trava (in eastern Serbia), comes of a prominent nationalist family. His father, Milic Popovic, is a well-to-do construction engineer. The younger Popovic is estranged from his brother, an Orthodox priest. Milentije Popovic's career is looked upon with disapproval by his family.

Popovic finished gymnasium, and studied building construction. Before the war he was in the building contracting business.

He has been a Communist since his youth, and was arrested and punished for subversive activities several times. He became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Serbia before the war, and is now one of the acknowledged leaders of Communism in Serbia.

Joining the Partisan movement at its inception, he occupied various responsible political posts, was a member of AVNOJ, POJ, NOV, and of PNCO for Serbia. He was concerned principally with the organization of eastern Serbia along Communist lines. He became noted for his uncompromising attitude and his ruthless elimination of political opponents.

After the war he was appointed Minister of the Interior, a position which he held until the first Central Government was formed.

Popovic became successively Minister of the Interior of Serbia and President of the Planning Commission for Serbia, which latter post he held until his appointment as Minister of Foreign Trade in the Central Government.

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